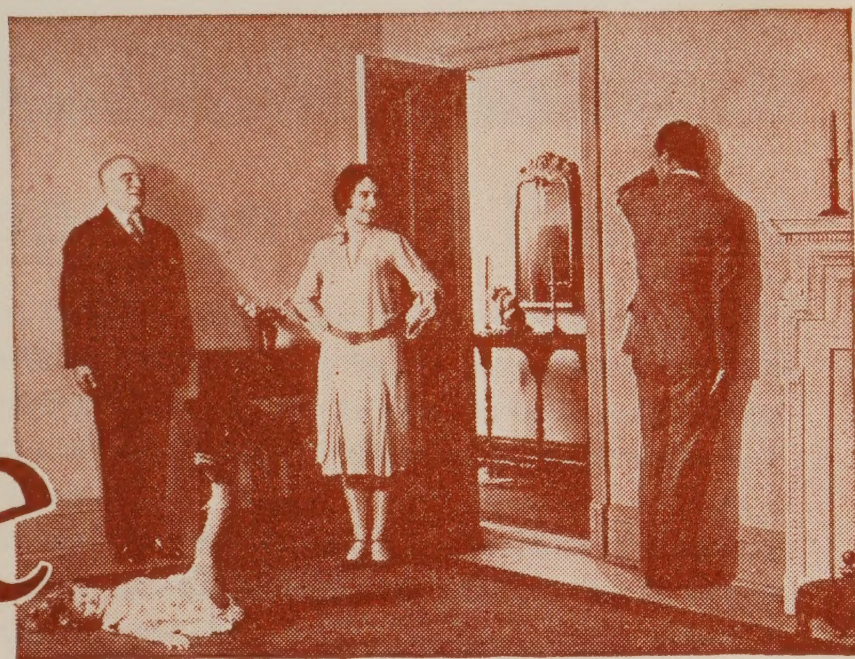


The



Importance of Posture

**METROPOLITAN LIFE
INSURANCE COMPANY**

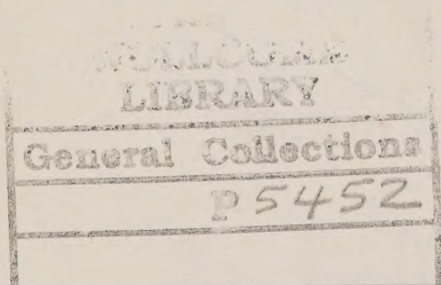
HOME OFFICE—NEW YORK

Pacific Coast Head Office—San Francisco

British Isles Head Office—London

Canadian Head Office—Ottawa

Copyright, 1927
METROPOLITAN LIFE
INSURANCE COMPANY



Wellcome Library



22503570962



The Importance of Posture

POSTURE in its broadest sense means the carriage of the body in standing, walking, sitting and lying. In a mechanical sense it means the relation of the various parts of the body to each other and to the body as a whole. Posture involves the position of the feet, the trunk and the head.

Posture affects one's health, efficiency, and social and economic value. It reflects one's mental attitude toward life and it largely determines what one is physically.

Judging by the structure of the human body, it seems that man is really a four-legged animal that walks on two of them only. By assuming the standing position, man has freed two limbs so that they would become arms, has lifted his head so that he would see better and farther, and in general has increased his ability to move about and to work. But he also has paid the price for his changed position in the form of possible body defects, such as varicose veins, flat feet, hernias, sagging abdominal organs, and various curvatures of the spine.

Although man has been paying the price, he need not of necessity always do so. For as he learns how to stand, sit, walk and work in the proper position, these various defects are avoided and man gains much and loses nothing.

Right posture makes it possible to work day after day without waste of energy. It permits all of the organs of the body to do their work properly. Training in correct posture cannot begin too early in life. Children should be taught to carry themselves so that their bodies will develop normally.

The Correct Standing Position

TO stand correctly, a person should stand as tall as possible without rising on the toes—the head up, the chin in, the shoulders squared evenly, the chest out, the spine as

straight as possible, the arms hanging naturally at the side, the abdomen in and the knees straight without strain.



With the chin drawn in and the feet straight ahead, the body's weight rests upon the full length of the thighs and on the balls of the feet. A line dropped from the ear crosses the middle of the tip of the shoulder, the middle of the hip-bone and passes just in front of the knees, reaching the floor opposite the most prominent part of the outer side of the foot.

An easy way to assume this correct position is to stand back to a wall, with the head, hips and shoulders touching and the heels four inches away. This simple setting up of the body puts one in correct position for standing and walking.

The Correct Sitting Position

IN sitting, the same position of the trunk should be maintained. When it is necessary to bend forward over work, the bending should be from the hips and not from the middle of the back or the shoulders. The body and head should be held in one straight line. The muscles should not be strained with the effort of holding the body erect. It may seem at first that it takes considerable muscular effort to hold the body correctly, but in a very short time it will become natural.

It is important to choose chairs of the right height so that the feet will rest squarely on the floor. The back of the chair should be so constructed as to fit and support the normal curves of the body. Desks and work-tables should be just high enough so that the forearms and hands may rest upon them without the shoulders being hunched up. The desk or table should come as near the body as possible without touching it. This



prevents leaning too far forward. If this posture is taken the head will be erect, the arms will have a support, the chest will expand easily, the shoulders will be on a level, and the back will be straight.

The Correct Lying Position

SLEEPING positions should be varied to correct individual faults of posture. Since a third or more of each twenty-four hours is spent in bed, the sleeping posture has great influence on the posture maintained throughout the day.

Especially in the case of children is it vitally important that the sleeping posture is correct so that the bones of the spine will be properly shaped and correctly held together.

Wrong sleeping positions are frequently a cause of curvature of the spine. Habitual lying on one side only allows a sidewise sag in the spine between the hip and the shoulder. High pillows should not be used. Many persons who have fine carriage sleep on their backs and use no pillows. The body should not be bent, but should be stretched as long and straight as possible.

Many persons who suffer from cold feet when they are in bed would find that this condition is relieved by straightening out the body so that the blood is able to circulate freely.

What Poor Posture Does to the Body

WRONG posture is far more common than right posture. That is perhaps one of the reasons why so many people feel tired or below par most of the time.

The human body is somewhat like a watch. If the case of the watch is badly bent it throws all the bits of intricate machinery out of their natural positions, and the watch will not keep correct time. If the bony framework of the body is misshapen or the muscles are not strong enough to support the body in a correct position, the internal organs are thrown out of their natural position and cannot do their work properly.

Each organ of the body must work in harmony with the other organs. If one is out of order or out of place the others are affected.

In the abdominal space there are ridges or shelves upon which these organs rest when the body is straight. If the body is not held erect in sitting and standing—if the shoulders are rounded and the back bent—the kidneys, stomach and other organs are pushed out of place. If bad posture is not corrected, the muscles adapt themselves to the wrong position and the organs are kept permanently out of place.



The bad effects of certain incorrect postures upon the internal organs of the body are easily explained. When the shoulders are stooped and the neck is pushed forward, the ligaments which are fastened to the breastbone are loosened, and the breastbone and ribs sink, making less room for the heart and lungs. The lungs cannot expand to their full capacity, the body does not get the oxygen it requires, and the blood is not purified as it should be. It may even be that the crowding of the chest permits the germs of tuberculosis more readily to get a foothold in the unused tips of the lungs. The action of the heart may also be disturbed by the overcrowding which comes with bent shoulders and drooping head.

The organs of the abdomen are affected by stooped shoulders. The ribs and all that they enclose are forced down upon the abdomen and tend to displace its organs. The flabby or undernourished muscles of the abdominal walls allow these organs to drop—they are crowded downward from one to five inches, and pushed into or upon one another.

The normal folds and turns in the digestive tube are apt to be deepened when the wall of the abdomen is folded inward at the belt-line. This may interfere with the natural action of the intestines, and possibly cause increased growth of harmful bacteria. The poisons which these bacteria produce may then more readily be carried into the tissues of the body, overburdening the circulatory and waste-eliminating systems, and causing headache, nervousness, constipation, the possible poisoning that goes with intestinal sluggishness, excessive fatigue, and a lessening of the amount of work the body and mind can do.

Poor posture, by bringing needless strain on the muscles and the ligaments, often causes pain at the base of the skull, and in the abdomen, chest or limbs. These pains are frequently wrongly charged to rheumatism or sciatica.

Causes of Wrong Posture

WRONG posture is caused usually by one or more of the following conditions:

1. Malnutrition and excessive fatigue.
2. Carelessness.
3. Holding in one position for too long a time.
4. A wrong mental attitude.
5. Wrong clothing—fitting so that it continually pushes or pulls the body out of its right position.
6. Bad eyesight. A near-sighted person usually pushes his head forward in order to see with better ease. Properly fitted glasses would not only improve his eyesight, but his posture as well.
7. Foot-arch troubles. A flat-footed person rarely walks or stands properly.

Many cases of bad posture are due to the general weakness of a body which has too little weight to support its height. This is quite frequently the case among children. Where this condition exists, the first need is to correct the malnutrition and bring the child up to his normal weight. The posture improves as weight increases.

When the defects of posture are due to over-fatigue and under-weight, the extra strain of corrective exercises may add to the burden and make the condition worse. The body cannot expend more energy than it produces without lowering its vitality.

Symptoms are not always apparent in cases of bad posture. The misplaced organs may suffer for a long time without protest, but sooner or later the general health of the body will be injured, and its power to resist disease lowered.

School children who have poor posture rank lower in attendance, in deportment, in physical activity, in endurance, and in scholarship, than the average of those who have good posture.

Exercise for Posture*

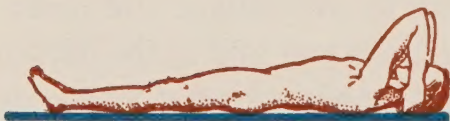
GOOD posture does not run to extremes; it is not wooden, nor is it in a check-rein attitude. In good posture the body is erect, but not drumstick straight.

Good posture seldom comes from just holding heads up, etc., etc., for five minutes, for more than an hour, or perhaps even a day. Good posture cannot be maintained by will power alone. If wishing were accomplishing, everyone would be erect. If words could straighten backs, all would be straight. But neither will power, words, nor wishing alone can accomplish the desired result. Trained and adequate muscles are essential.

Many persons are swivel-chair workers. After a few years their muscles become flabby and are not strong enough to hold them up straight. That is one reason for the all too common slouch and it is particularly true of the back muscles. Too much physical work is done with chest muscles. They pull one forward and the back muscles are not strong enough to pull back. Therefore, if the body is to be straightened out the back muscles must be exercised.

What is true of the back muscles is equally true of the muscles of the trunk and abdomen. They are not used much, and if they are not exercised enough they become soft, they give way, and soon a "bay window" and a hollow in the small of the back develop.

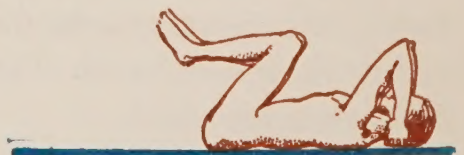
GENERAL EXERCISES



EXERCISE 1

1. Lying on the back, hands back of neck. Take a deep breath and raise chest high. Keep chest up and exhale by pulling abdomen in hard.

2. Same position, knees bent, feet pulled up. Pull abdomen in hard and then relax part way. Also done standing with hands clasped on top of head.



EXERCISE 2

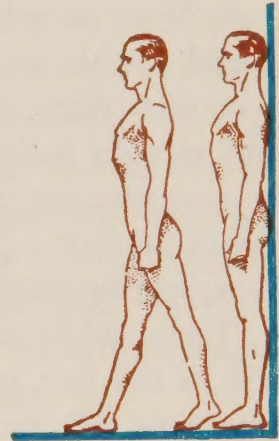
*Much of the material given here is taken from the work of DR. ARMIN-KLEIN, published by the Children's Bureau, United States Department of Labor.

3. Sitting in a chair, trunk bending forward. Incline trunk forward from the hips, keeping spine straight. This is the position which should be taken when bending forward to write or to do any other kind of desk work. The absence of the lowered chest and rounded back and shoulders of the incorrect position is striking. This exercise may be done standing.



EXERCISE 3

4. Standing, abdominal retraction. Stand with the heels four inches away from the wall, but with the hips, shoulders, and head touching the wall. Flatten the lower part of the back against the wall by pulling in the abdominal muscles. This causes a downward rolling motion in the lower part of the back and flattens the lumbar curve. Holding this position, come away from the wall with the weight well forward on the balls of the feet. This will give the correct standing position.



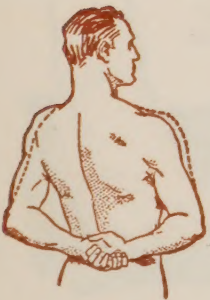
EXERCISE 4



EXERCISE 5

5. Standing, leg raising. Stand with hands on hips, back flat and chin in. Raise leg forward without bending the knee. Lower it. Repeat with other leg. This exercise teaches how to hold the back flat while balancing the body and doing a leg exercise.

EXERCISES THAT HELP TO CORRECT



EXERCISE 6

6. To correct round shoulders. Clasp hands behind back at the waist line. Roll shoulders back and down; then relax.

7. Carrying the head forward, clasp hands behind the head. Force the head back against their pressure. Keep the chin in. This strengthens the muscles of the back of the neck.



EXERCISE 7

8. Spinal curvatures. "Stand tall," holding the back straight. Rise on the toes with the arms extended forward and up, stretching the arms and the body.

9. Distended abdomen. This condition may be successfully prevented and largely overcome by doing Exercises 2 and 4.



EXERCISE 8

DEFORMITIES OF THE FEET

10. Since these have so important a bearing upon the general health of the body, efforts should be made to correct them through exercises, by wearing shoes with straight inside line and ample toe room, and by walking with the toes pointing straight ahead and with the weight on the outside edge of the foot. The foot should be given appropriate exercises to strengthen its muscles.

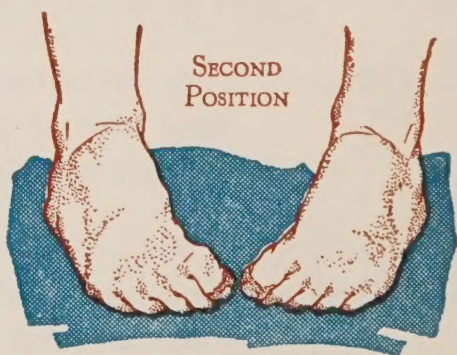
Toe-in while sitting or standing and double the toes under the balls of the feet, much as one does the fingers of the hands. At the same time roll the feet so the weight is on the outer edge; relax and repeat.

A weak person may at first do each of these exercises once or twice without resting and can soon work up to a dozen times. However, over-exercise should be avoided and the person should always relax for a moment when an exercise seems to be tiring him.

There should be vigorous out-of-door activities in addition to the special exercises. Every boy, girl, man, and woman should take up the



FIRST
POSITION



SECOND
POSITION

EXERCISES FOR THE FEET (No. 10)

sports and games for which they have a liking. There is a long list from which to choose:

Swimming

Rowing

Skating

Walking

Climbing

Baseball

Tennis

Horseback riding

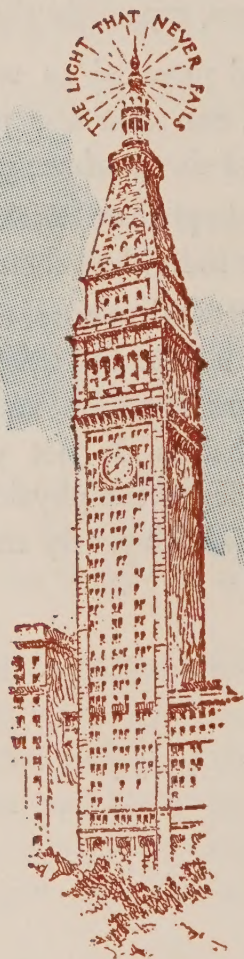
Dancing

and, in fact, all active games, especially the team ball games.

These sports are good physical as well as educational training. None of them, however, can take the place of definite, corrective exercises for the training of those whose posture needs correction.

To achieve the utmost in posture, with the physical benefits which endure, the training of the individual should begin in childhood.

While prevention is better than cure, many posture defects may be so serious as to require the advice and treatment of a medical specialist or orthopedic surgeon. Among adults, and particularly with children where the bad posture habits do not yield to personal effort or parental guidance, the advice of the physician as to underlying cause and correction frequently is both timely and necessary.



METROPOLITAN TOWER
MADISON SQUARE
NEW YORK